

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL

OF THE

MAGDALEN-HOSPITAL,

BEFORE THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

FRANCIS, EARL OF HERTFORD, &c.

P R E S I D E N T;

THE VICE-PRESIDENTS, TREASURER,

AND GOVERNORS, &c.

On WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1785.

AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY THE REVEREND

SERVINGTON SAVERY,

RECTOR OF HICKAM, LINCOLNSHIRE,

AND CHAPLIN TO THE EARL OF MORAY.

L O N D O N :

Printed for the CHARITY,

By R. & H. CAUSTON, No. 21, Finch-Lane; and

Sold by Mess. RIVINGTON, BATHURST, CADELL, and KEARSLEY, and
at the Hospital in St. George's Fields.

M D C C L X X X V .

*At the Annual Meeting of the Governors of the Magdalen
Hospital, holden at the London Tavern,
the 25th Day of May, 1785.*

R E S O L V E D,

THAT the Thanks of this Court be returned to the Rev.
Mr. SERVINGTON SAVERY, for his excellent Sermon
preached this Day, before the President, Vice-Presidents, Trea-
surer, and Governors of this Charity, at the Chapel of this
Hospital, and that he be desired to cause the same to be printed
and published.

By Order of the Court,

A. WINTERBOTTOM, *Secretary.*

TO
The RIGHT HONOURABLE
FRANCIS,
EARL OF HERTFORD,
PRESIDENT;

The RIGHT HONOURABLE ROBERT LORD ROMNEY,
The RIGHT HONOURABLE HUGH EARL OF PERCY,
The RIGHT HONOURABLE JACOB EARL OF RADNOR,
The HONOURABLE HENRY HOBART,
JOHN BARKER, Esq.
MICHAEL JAMES, Esq.
VICE-PRESIDENTS;

HUGH SETON, Esq.
TREASURER;

To the Rest of the GOVERNORS,
AND

SUBSCRIBERS

TO THE
MAGDALEN-HOSPITAL,

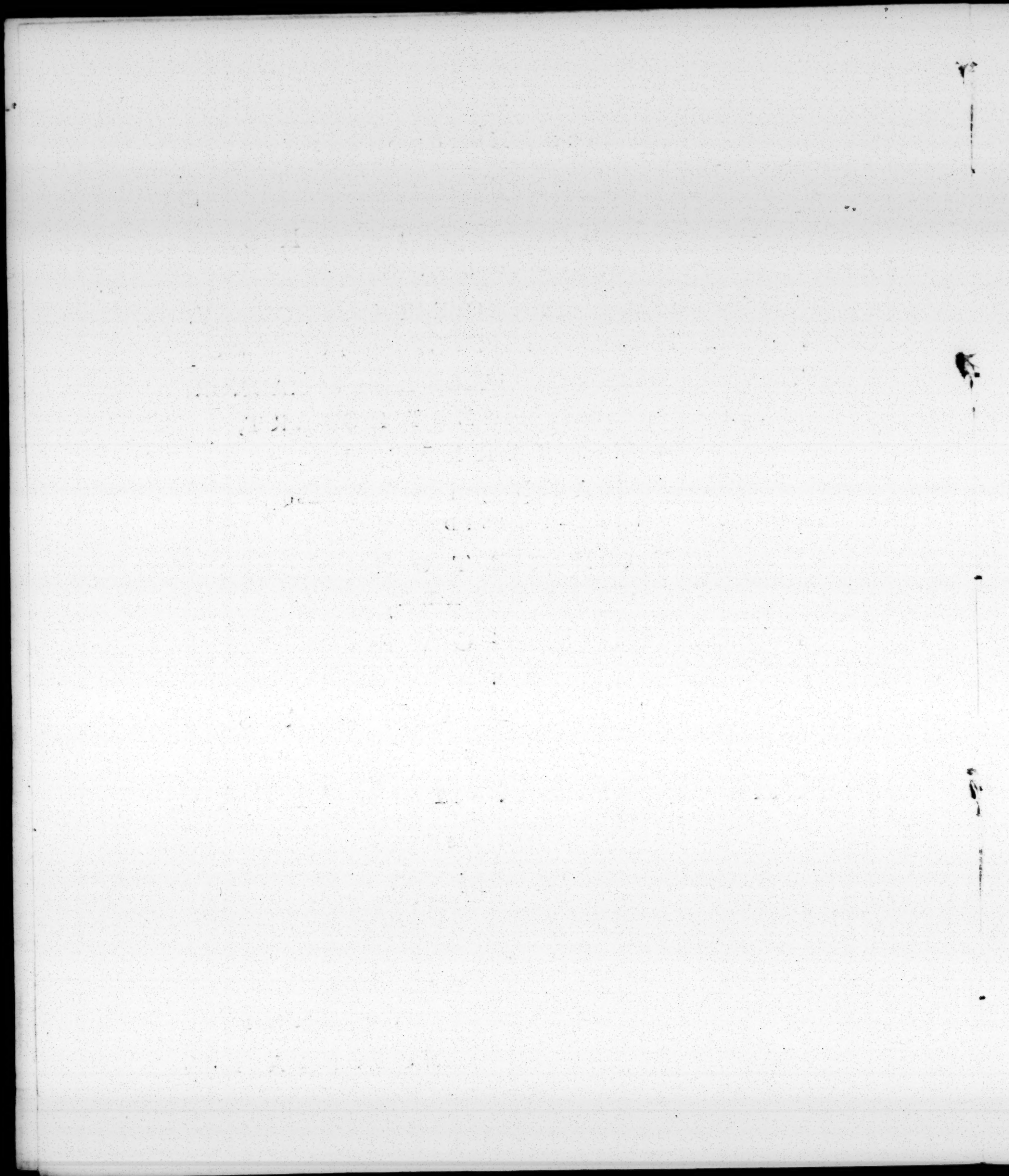
THIS
SERMON,

preached and published at their REQUEST,

IS, WITH ALL RESPECT, DEDICATED,

By their most faithful humble Servant.

SERVINGTON SAVERY.



A
S E R M O N.



E Z E K I E L, Chap. XXXVII. Ver. 23.

I will save them out of all their Dwelling-Places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my People, and I will be their God.

IT may justly be esteemed the most distinguishing Excellence of our holy Religion, that it doth not more powerfully deter the obstinate Sinner, by the Denunciations of Punishment, than it encourages the humble Penitent by the Promise of Forgiveness.—The *avenging Spirit* less frequently appears, than the *Angel of Mercy*; and we are every where rather invited to turn from our evil Ways, by the gentler Voice of Compassion, than alarmed by the awful Threatenings of Wrath and Condemnation.

The Language of the Text, affords Consolation to those, who have felt the Anguish of vicious Pursuits; and who wish to return to the Paths of Virtue and Peace, which they had unhappily deserted.—It may, in a general Sense, be considered as a gentle Admonition to all who have wandered from the right Way, not to persist in a forbidden Course, but immediately to forsake it: — Not to grow hardened from the Despair of Mercy, but to regard Repentance as still available, and the Door of Salvation as still open.

In a particular Application of the Text, to those who have been admitted into the Society of this House, it may well be regarded, as an Assurance issuing from the Lips of sovereign Mercy, that there is no Degree of Depravity in the present State, beyond the Limits of divine Forgiveness; but that a contrite Heart, trembling at the sad Review of its Offences, and struggling to be relieved from the Load of Guilt which oppresses it, may find Comfort in the Hope of that Liberty it pants to enjoy, and of being cleansed from the Pollutions which it beholds with Shame and Remorse.

To Minds thus impressed with the Sense of Sin, and melted with ingenuous Sorrow, this conciliatory Passage — “ I will save
 “ them out of all their dwelling Places, wherein they have sinned,
 “ and will cleanse them; so shall they be my People, and I will
 “ be their God,” — may be supposed to convey the following Messages of heavenly Compassion. — “ Though you have been
 “ seduced from your native Innocence, and for a while, may
 “ have forgotten that Modesty which is the loveliest Ornament
 “ of

“ of your Sex, and the great Auxiliary of Virtue; though you
 “ may have been inadvertently allured from the Abodes of
 “ Honour, to the Habitations of Infamy: — Though in the
 “ former you have left a Parent’s Heart breaking with Anguish;
 “ and found nothing in the latter to support your own. — Yet
 “ still is the Door of Mercy open to receive you; and if your
 “ Repentance be indeed sincere — if you are resolved to enter on
 “ a new Course of Life, and to pursue other Objects than those
 “ which have hitherto ensnared your steps, then will I rescue
 “ you from the Dwellings of Shame and Pollution, wherein ye
 “ have sinned; and after having tried your Sincerity, and esta-
 “ blished your Virtue in the House of Penitence, — will once
 “ more honour you with the Appellation of *my People*, and again
 “ condescend to be called *your God*.”

The Words which I have chosen, as the Ground of this Dis-
 course, justify their present Application. They are not delivered
 in the vindictive Language of an incensed Power, eager to punish
 and ripe to destroy; but breathe the gentle Spirit of a Father,
 who in “ Wrath remembereth Mercy:” — Who “ pities his
 “ Children,” when wandering in the thorny Wilderness of Sin,
 where they “ pierce their Souls with many Sorrows,” and give
 that Wound to the Spirit which none can bear: And who calls
 on them by every Argument that can convince the Understanding,
 and every Motive that can engage the Heart, to return to “ the
 “ Path of Life;” where * “ instead of the Thorn shall come up
 “ the Fir Tree, and instead of the Briar the Myrtle:” — Where
 the sweet Consolations of Virtue will assuage the pungent Sense
 of Guilt, and Honour will succeed Disgrace.

Though

Though the Gospel is totally irreconcilable with Vice in every Form; and though all its Precepts and all its Sanctions carry Terror to the guilty Heart, yet it only alarms in order to convert: and while it wounds, it prepares the Balm to heal. It calls Sinners to Repentance; and forbids the greatest to despair of Mercy. Its gracious Language is—*“repent and be converted, “that your Sins may be blotted out.”

Those who have imbibed most of the Spirit which it breathes, and who most nearly resemble the Examples it recommends, are most sincerely concern'd, like their divine Master, the Lord *Jesus Christ*, “to seek and to save them that are lost:”—To snatch the spotted Soul from that Desperation into which Shame, Remorse, and fearful Anxiety, too frequently precipitate the hopeless Offender:—To save the self-condemned Criminals from themselves; and without flattering them with delusive Hopes, prevent them from falling Sacrifices to yet more delusive Apprehensions.

To the Charity now recommended to your Support, the Precepts of the Gospel are not less auspicious than the common Dictates of Humanity; and it is only necessary to look around this Metropolis, of which almost every Street is crowded with Female Youth, ensnared even till they become the Ensnarers, to be convinced of the Utility, and to ascertain the Praise which is justly due to an Institution formed on so Christian-like a Plan.

If ever the human Condition felt a Punishment, proportioned to the Vices which produced its Disgrace and Misery, it is *that* Condition

Condition which it is the Object of this benevolent Institution to relieve. — Is there a Distress, — is there an Indignity, — nay, is there a shameless Brutality, to which its unhappy Victims are not subject? — Reputation, Connections, Health, Ease and Comfort: — all that makes Life honourable, and all that renders it pleasant, forfeited and lost! — And in the stead of these desirable Blessings, what do they possess — but disgraceful Associations, an abhorred and polluted Name; every Species of Disease, Adversity, and Infamy? — The Dwelling Places where they have sinned are the Receptacles of Wretches who exist in slothful Luxury, upon the Crimes of others: — their Retreats by Day such as best seclude them from the Eye of an indignant World: and their Haunts by Night adapted to the Darkness and Pollution of their Characters.

Were this only a singular Instance of some few helpless Individuals, Pity might well take an Interest in their Fate, and drop a Tear over their Misfortunes. — But when we know by melancholy Proof, that Thousands are involved in the Wretchedness which is here only imperfectly delineated, surely the hardest Heart must be softened by Compassion, and be ready to bless an Institution which deprives the Vicious of the Plea of Necessity; and leaves them without Excuse, if they persevere in the Path which they have so many Encouragements to forsake.

Here, therefore, let me entreat you to deposit of that Treasure, with which Heaven hath blessed you, for the sake of making you a Blessing to others. Nor think that we prophane the holy Ground of Religion, when in this sacred Place we implore your

Compassion for the most wretched of human Beings. — We follow the noblest and purest Examples : — We conform to that holy Word, by which, at a Tribunal more awful than that of man, we shall ourselves be judged, when we have “ Compassion on the Ignorant, and on them that are out of the Way ;” and when that Compassion doth not expire in plaintive Exclamations or mournful Sighs ; but is substantiated by Exertions, and confirmed by Actions, worthy of a Principle that bears the Name, and claims the Character, of Christian Pity.

The general Utility and particular Excellencies of the Charity, which we are now assembled to support—have been so frequently and so eloquently displayed on these Occasions, that it would be superfluous to produce them afresh ; nor could I hope to give them new Force or Embellishment, by additional Arguments or Illustrations ; yet it is impossible wholly to pass over a Subject so delightful to the true Lover of human Kind, and of that Mercy which is the most illustrious Ornament of the Christian Religion.

The Advantages which result from this humane and admirable Institution ; — An Institution boasting for its PATRONESS, a Character of the first and most august Distinction, for Preheminence in Virtue as well as Rank—and who adorns Religion as she dignifies Royalty : — Its Advantages are too numerous not to be perceived, and too important not to be admired ; however the cold and rigid may with-hold the Tribute of their Acknowledgement, and although there may be those, who, affecting a superior delicacy of Sentiment, may throw out invidious Reflections on its Tendency ; and under the Pretence of preserving the Decorum of Society and discouraging

discouraging Vice, bar the Gates of Mercy, even against Repentance and Reformation.

But whatever may be the Blindness of Ignorance, the Suggestions of Avarice, the Pretence of Dissipation, or the Colourings of false Zeal, all conspiring to misrepresent the Design, Principles and Regulations of this Charity, it finds its Security, in its own excellent Constitution: And the good Effects that have already flowed from it, as well as the Good it is still calculated to bestow and promote, is the best Answer that can be given to those, who coldly ballance between one Scruple and another, till they are afraid to do any positive Good, lest some positive Evil should spring out of it.

But I trust I am addressing myself to those, whose Minds are formed on more liberal Principles; who feel and cherish the Impulses of Benevolence, and when fit Objects of it are pointed out, give the "genial Current" its full and free Course, and consider the Cry of Misery as the Call of Heaven.

Those indeed, who have *felt* the Struggle between virtuous and vicious Conduct — between a Life of Regularity and Intemperance — can best conceive the Anguish of the Soul that is at variance with itself — where the "Flesh and the Spirit," Conscience and Passion, like two contending Elements in Nature, hold War with each other, and in the dreadful Conflict rend the Heart asunder. — These know, alas, too fatally, the worth of Virtue, like the Value of Health, by the Loss of it: — they feel, by melancholy Experience, how dreadful it is, when the Soul aroused from the Dreams of false Happiness — that Happiness which Sin dresses in transient Colours, that fade and
wither:

wither as they are touched — looks around for some permanent Satisfaction, and can find nothing but Distress and Remorse awaiting it; when the Path behind is marked with the deepest Traces of Folly and Vice, and the Prospect before is overspread with the Darkness of Despair!

And can we refuse our Pity to those who feel the Agonies of Remorse, though we abhor the Cause which produced them? — If Mercy hath dawned with gracious Rays on our Bosoms; — If the “Rain which Heaven distils” hath *washed them white as Snow*, — shall we not labour that others, who have more deeply offended, may partake the same Blessing? — And how can the Forlorn receive the Comforts of this healing Bethesda, so adapted to wash away the Pollutions of Guilt, and cleanse the Soul, if all the Streams of Charity are dried up; or the Flood-Gates of Compassion shut against them? —

It is to be feared, that the chilling Neglect of the World, and their own conscious Turpitude, united to assailing Wants of various Kinds, keeps many Sinners from Repentance. — They cry for Deliverance, yet are left to all the Terrors of their Fate, because no kind Hand is stretched forth to pluck them out of the “* horrible Pit, and out of the miry Clay,” and “set their Feet “once more upon a Rock where their goings might be established.”

There are many indeed, who never “fell into those Temptations which drown the Soul in Perdition:” — whose Bosoms are as pure as their Conduct is un sullied: and who truly deserve the spotless Fame they enjoy: — who are blessed with the clear Sunshine of an applauding Conscience, and to whom the great
Pattern

Pattern of Righteousness and Virtue would say — “ the same is
 “ my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.” — Thrice happy are
 those to whose Bosoms, Guilt, with its dreadful Attendants —
 Remorse and Shame, is a Stranger ! — Ever may it remain at a
 Distance from the Habitations of Purity and Peace ! “ But let
 “ him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”*

Humility, aided by Prayer, is the best Security for our future
 Perseverance in Virtue ; and Charity is the best Tribute of Gra-
 titude for the past. If our Strength has been greater, — if our
 Temptations have been fewer, or our Power of Resistance hath
 been triumphant over yet *more* Snares, instead of boasting of our
 Fortitude, or confiding in our Resolutions, let us rather bow
 humbly to the Author of all Grace ; and while we afford a Tear
 of sincere Compassion for those who have been less firm or less
 fortunate, let us recollect the Words of the Apostle — “ Who
 “ maketh thee to differ ? and what hast thou that thou hast not
 “ received ?”

You therefore, who know the exalted Satisfactions of Virtue,
 by your own happy Experience — who feel her holy Influence,
 like a Light from Heaven kindling in your Hearts — soothing
 every Affliction, and alleviating every Load of Life, will not fail,
 I trust, particularly to deplore the Misery of those who have
 unhappily forfeited the Consolations you enjoy : and the Sweet-
 ness and Benignity of the Disposition, which excites you to this
 Sympathy of the Guilty and Miserable, will incline you also to
 do all you can to relieve them.

D

Humanity

* 1 Cor. x. 12.

Humanity, Religion, every Attribute of our common Nature, every Dictate of Society, and every Precept of the Gospel, forbid us to say — “ They have brought their Distress on themselves, “ and therefore let them feel it ! ” — They have indeed felt it, — but O let them not feel it for *ever* ! This is far different from the Judgment, by which we shall wish to have our future State decided. For ever ! — will the pitying Eye of God forgive such Implacability in the human Heart ? — And what if “ the Measure “ which we mete be measured to us again ! ”

The end of Punishment is Reformation : the bitter Draught of Affliction may prove a salutary Medicine ; but unless it is tempered with the “ Milk of human Kindness,” it may corrode the Heart, and aggravate its Anguish, but will neither heal its Wounds, nor cleanse its Pollutions. — *You* then “ who have “ escaped the Corruptions of the World ” — permit me earnestly to solicit your Compassion, for those of your own Sex, who, though they have grievously offended, are yet of the same Nature with yourselves : — yet within the Reach of Divine Mercy — and yet capable of being raised by your Assistance to their original Rank in the Creation of God. — The Sisters of Sorrow — cast the imploring Look — towards the Sisters of Virtue : — Thousands are yet at the Doors fighting for Admittance ! — O shut them not against their Hopes ; — restore them to Society — to themselves ! — save them e’er they perish. Such Benevolence will brighten the gloomiest Shades with which Affliction may surround your Dwellings. — It will visit you like an Angel of Mercy on the Bed of Death, and cast an enlivening Beam even on the Darkness of the Grave.

Thus

Thus will you give a beauteous Evidence of Minds congenial to the ministering Spirits of the heavenly World, who pitied our Distress and deplored our Guilt when fallen; — who flew on the swift Wings of Love and Joy, to congratulate the human Race on the Birth of the great Saviour of lost Mankind; and who, when proclaiming “Peace on Earth and Goodwill towards Men,” ascribed for the Blessings bestowed upon us, **“Glory to God in the highest.”*

Let us sometimes lose ourselves in the Joys or Sorrows of others; — or rather, let those of others constitute our own. Oh! let us for a Moment reflect on the Happiness diffused by every Support, which Compassion affords to this excellent Charity. — Among others, let us think of the Distress of a Parent’s Heart, the Treasure of whose Soul, and the Delight of whose Eyes, hath forsaken at once both him and Virtue. — Behold the one left Heart-broken, in a House where every Object reminds him of his former Delight, only to encrease his present Agony; — while the other, deserted by her Betrayer, wanders an Outcast in the Paths of Folly and Vice, till she is seduced to the Dwelling-Places where she sins in full Security. — Conceive that you behold a Sister humbled to the Dust with a Sense of her Crime, while the disgraced Family, that had center’d all it’s Affections, all it’s Hopes, in a favourite Daughter, labours under a Load of Ignominy, which it vainly wishes to conceal from the World. — Too many, alas, are realizing this horrible Picture. — But though nothing can compleatly heal the deep Wound a Parent’s Tenderness receives from such an Event, yet how greatly does it tend to relieve its anguish, when he knows that this Door of Mercy is
thrown

thrown open to the wretched Fugitive — who has fled from Guilt and Deceit, to a Sanctuary, which parental Justice, and a Regard to the Peace, Credit, and Honour of his House, might make it impossible she should receive at Home. —

Yours then, it is to support an Institution, fraught with these Blessings. — *Yours* to lead back the unfortunate from the perilous Walks of Error, Folly and Vice, to those Paths which Virtue adorns with unfading Charms, and Hope refreshes with perpetual Consolations: — *Yours*, to revive the drooping Spirit, and brighten the Countenance that Sorrow has clouded. — *Yours* perhaps, not only to prevent the grey Hairs of the aged Parent, from sinking in Disgrace and Anguish to the Grave, — but to fit even these for the Society of blessed Spirits above, whom Vice and Infamy had before disqualified for the decent Intercourses of common Life on Earth. — If we have any real Sensibility, these Considerations must sink deep into our Bosoms, till they settle into Principles, and influence our Conduct. — He who wipes the Tear from the Cheek of the Penitent — who rescues the Wretched from Disease and Perdition, may also “ save a Soul from Death ;” and he will surely be rewarded by the Power whose Benevolence he imitates.

That an Imitation so exalted may be the great Object of our Ambition; — that every one present may feel his Heart expand and his Hand open, — and that every return of this Day, may see fresh Offerings of true Piety in this Temple of Mercy — may God grant. To whom, with the Son and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Praise, now and for ever. *Amen!*

F I N I S.

